

Lieutenant General Robert L. Bullard
Understanding Small and Large Conflicts

A Monograph
by
LTC Thomas R. Gordon, Jr.
United States Army



School of Advanced Military Studies
United States Army Command and General Staff College
Fort Leavenworth, Kansas

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LTC Thomas R. Gordon, Jr.

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Approved by:

Thomas A. Bruscino, Ph.D.

Monograph Director

Robert J. Dixon, COL, LG

Second Reader

Thomas C. Graves, COL, IN

Director,
School of Advanced
Military Studies

Robert F. Baumann, Ph.D.

Director,
Graduate Degree
Programs

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Abstract

LIEUTENANT GENERAL ROBERT L. BULLARD: UNDERSTANDING SMALL AND LARGE CONFLICTS, by Lieutenant Colonel Thomas R. Gordon, Jr., U.S. Army, 44 pages.

The purpose of this monograph is to examine the career of LTG Robert L. Bullard. Bullard served during a seminal period in United States history. Often overlooked as one of the nation's more progressive and ambitious leaders, largely because of the time he served and biases he held, Bullard's memoirs and papers offer a valuable perspective to examine this era. Bullard's experiences during his initial assignments as a junior officer, the Philippine Insurrection, and the Spanish-American War prepared him for his later career when he commanded at the most senior levels during World War I. A comprehensive examination of these experiences demonstrates Bullard's candid understanding of culture and its significance as it relates to conflict, views on military education and leadership (preparedness), and ability (mental aptitude) to see the operational environment during small and large conflicts. These attributes contributed to and shaped his operational approach to achieve strategic objectives throughout his distinguished professional life.

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Introduction

Today's military leaders are faced with solving the complex and difficult issues confronting the nation. Working in austere environments and hastily learning diverse cultures, operational planners must balance the realities of conflict with the intricacies of the people affected when forces are introduced into a theater of operation. As decisions are made, great attention and consideration are necessary to the successful execution of an operation. In order to ensure this success, leadership is required, understanding is paramount, and preparedness (through education, training and experience) is essential. The leader or operational planner must also possess a highly developed mental capacity – this aptitude is obligatory as decisions are made and lives often hang in the balance. History frequently provides a template for the operational practitioner. Demonstrating competent leadership, candid understanding, and a desire to reflect on experience are just a few of the qualities Lieutenant General Robert Lee Bullard exercised throughout his forty-four year military career. Looking through the lens of history and tracing the footsteps of General Bullard offers insight to the problems facing today's operational leaders and solutions that have great relevance in today's operational environment.

Prussian theorist and military philosopher, Carl von Clausewitz, suggests that the expression 'genius' "refers to a very highly developed mental aptitude for a particular occupation."¹ The latest version of the Army's *ADP 6-22 Leadership* describes Clausewitz's 'mental aptitude' as being mentally agile. This mental agility helps leaders address changes and adapt to the situation and the dynamics of operations.² Leadership also arises from the knowledge gained through experience and frequently requires initiative on the part of the individual to

¹ Carl von Clausewitz, *On War*, trans. and ed. by Michael Howard and Peter Paret (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1976), 100.

² Headquarters, Department of the Army, Army Doctrinal Publication 6-22, *Army Leadership* (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 2012), 2-9.

assume responsibility.³ Training and experience, therefore, are the catalysts that provide a leader the understanding necessary to demonstrate ‘genius’ as Clausewitz implies. This is not to say experience is predetermined or equates to certainty. It is simply a means that enables a leader to understand a problem. Understanding the unfamiliar is an essential capacity for the operational leader – arguably, the leader gains a broader base of understanding through an array of diverse experiences. These experiences provide lessons to those who will follow.

According to current doctrine, “understanding is fundamental to the commander’s ability to establish a situation’s context.”⁴ Before a leader can visualize an operational approach or end state, he or she must first understand the situation and context of the problem at hand. With an understanding and visualization, the commander is able to process the problem and develop situational awareness and understanding.⁵ As situational understanding is achieved, the commander can then effectively describe his vision and end state to his subordinates (including planners and unit commanders), and more capably direct all aspects of operations.⁶ From an operational perspective, failure to understand the problem results in the breakdown or inability to achieve the strategic objective from the operational to the tactical levels of war.

Once a leader correctly understands, visualizes, and describes a problem, a staff or subordinate unit can effectively develop feasible courses of action, that later can be selected, implemented, and refined. The operational planner (more precisely, the operational leader) must possess the ability to pursue “strategic objectives, in whole or in part, through the arrangement of

³ Ibid.

⁴ Headquarters, Department of the Army, Army Doctrinal Reference Publication 5-0, *The Operations Process* (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 2012), 1-3.

⁵ Ibid., 1-4.

⁶ Ibid., 1-6.

tactical actions in time, space, and purpose.”⁷ This ability to practice operational art “spans a continuum – from comprehensive strategic direction to concrete tactical actions.”⁸ Bridging the strategic and tactical requires “creative vision coupled with broad experience and knowledge.”⁹ Exposure to a variety of situations grounds the leader and further builds the ‘broad experience and knowledge’ necessary for the leader to see the operational environment.

The tactical leaders of today will eventually become the operational and strategic leaders of tomorrow. This observation is by no means extraordinary. Those who served at the platoon and company levels during the Mexican-American War became general officers during the U.S. Civil War; likewise, today’s junior leaders will someday assume tomorrow’s senior operational and strategic leadership positions. It is essential that these leaders, as they develop, learn from those who came before them.

As previously stated, leadership, understanding, and preparedness (as foundations gained through training and experience) coupled with a solid mental aptitude are all compulsory attributes of the operational leader. Since the end of the Cold War, these traits served the United States and its leaders well during the 1991 Gulf War, as the conflict fit a predictable template for which western nations had spent fifty years preparing. Not evident at the time, a shift in the conventional approach to conflict began to appear. After Operation Desert Storm, the United States and most of the industrialized world has been engaged in a multi-front campaign to eradicate – or, at a minimum, neutralize – terrorist and non-state organizations. This period is not unlike the era in American history when the nation began to recover from its own acrimonious civil war. As the country healed, the military became involved in numerous small conflicts at

⁷ Operational Art definition taken from Department of the Army, Army Doctrinal Reference Publication 3-0: *Unified Land Operations* (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 2012), IV.

⁸ Ibid., 1-4.

⁹ Ibid.

home and abroad. This epoch offers an insightful perspective into the American military experience: transitioning from operations in small wars to the conduct of larger scale operations during conventional war. Lieutenant General Robert Lee Bullard served during this seminal period. Often overlooked as one of the nation's more progressive and ambitious leaders, largely because of the time he served and biases he held, Bullard's memoirs and papers offer a valuable perspective to examine this era. Bullard's experiences during his initial assignments as a junior officer, the Philippine Insurrection, and the Spanish-American War prepared him for his later career when he commanded at the most senior levels during World War I. A comprehensive examination of these experiences demonstrates Bullard's candid understanding of culture and its significance as it relates to conflict, views on military education and leadership (preparedness), and ability (mental aptitude) to see the operational environment during small and large conflicts. These attributes contributed to and shaped his operational approach to achieve strategic objectives throughout his distinguished professional life.

Bullard wrote extensively in military journals and published detailed accounts of his experiences during World War I titled, *Personalities and Reminiscences of the War*.¹⁰ In 1931, after retiring in 1925, he began writing a follow up to *Personalities* titled, *American Soldiers Also Fought*.¹¹ According to Bullard, various opinions of World War I began appearing and he desired "to set the record straight."¹² He specifically stated, "The belittlements of America's part in the war" needed to be corrected.¹³ He also wrote detailed biographies of seven close subordinates and colleagues titled, *Fighting Generals: Illustrated Biographical Sketches of Seven Major Generals*

¹⁰ Robert L. Bullard, *Personalities and Reminiscences of the War* (New York: Doubleday Publishing, 1925).

¹¹ Robert L. Bullard, *American Soldiers Also Fought* (Garden City, NY: Longmens and Green, 1936).

¹² Ibid., V.

¹³ Ibid., VI.

in World War I. These biographies provide a unique perspective as to how Bullard viewed those he served alongside.¹⁴

Prior to publishing his personal memoirs, however, Bullard focused a great deal of time writing in popular magazines and Army publications such as the *Infantry Journal*. These writings started to appear and circulate after his experiences in the Philippines and continued until his death in 1947. Bullard also chronicled his career in diaries and notebooks. These documents currently reside in the Library of Congress and the National War College, and contain insight into the mind of the experienced officer. Through these writings, this monograph discusses his thoughts and determines how he developed into an operational leader; from his entry into the United States Military Academy to serving at the most senior levels during World War I.

Few outside military circles know the name Robert Lee Bullard. In 1975, Allan R. Millett wrote a complete account of Bullard's life and the period during which he served in the United States Army.¹⁵ His biography highlights the professionalization of the United States Army and its officer corps – Bullard's career demonstrates this influential transition as the United States became one of the world's superpowers. Like many other officers of his time, he did not advance through the ranks quickly, and he frequently moved back in rank at the end of a tour or conflict. Because Bullard did not rise through the ranks rapidly as many did later in the twentieth century, he was able to mature as a company and field grade officer longer – arguably allowing him to hone skills he would later exhibit as a general officer. It was Millett's biography and Bullard's writings that inspired the topic of this monograph, as well as a desire to take a deeper conceptual look at methods and techniques involved with the application of pacification principles. There are

¹⁴ Robert L. Bullard, *Fighting Generals: Illustrated Biographical Sketches Of Seven Major Generals In World War I* (Ann Arbor, MI: J.W. Edwards, 1944).

¹⁵ Allan R. Millett. *The General: Robert L. Bullard and Officership in the United States Army, 1881-1925* (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 1975).

no other comprehensive works on Bullard. The thesis of this monograph morphed from a topic focused on the application of military pacification to Bullard's personal experiences during his early career and how those experiences enabled him to become a successful commander in World War I. Lieutenant General Bullard's life and career provide a useful case study for future operational leaders.

The thesis of this monograph examines Bullard's candid understanding of culture and its significance as it relates to conflict, his views on military education and leadership (preparedness), and his ability (mental aptitude) to see the operational environment during small and large conflicts. In an effort to illustrate these characteristics of Bullard, the monograph is structured to discuss his early military education and experience, attributes important to operational leaders, and his senior service during World War I. Understanding Bullard's journey demonstrates lessons he learned during small conflicts and how they applied during larger wars for today's and future operational leaders.

Military Education and Experience – 1881-1906

Born on 15 January 1861 as the nation was on the cusp of civil war, Bullard grew up in rural Russell County, Alabama. His given name at birth was William Robert, but in 1866, Bullard approached his father and asked if he could change his name to Robert Lee in honor of one of his boyhood heroes – Confederate Army General Robert E. Lee; his parents obliged him. He was the second youngest of twelve children to Daniel and Susan Bullard.¹⁶ Life was difficult in his hometown of Opelika, Alabama immediately following the war. Due to this hardship and personally witnessing the widespread suffering in the once proud South, Bullard grew up an introvert who rarely demonstrated the strong and aggressive tendencies that would later personify

¹⁶ Millett, *The General*, 20-22.

his military career. His perspective was limited to the rustic confines of Russell County. Growing up near a large extended family, Bullard learned the values of competition and determination. As his family's fortunes improved around 1868, Daniel Bullard could then afford to hire schoolteachers for his children and the other youngsters who worked the Bullard farm. This opportunity proved to be fortuitous; Bullard's academic prowess became evident early. He had discovered a niche in education and through learning found self-determination.¹⁷

In 1880, after attending the Agricultural and Mechanical College of Alabama for a short period, Bullard sought and received an appointment to the United States Military Academy. He later reflected and sought to pursue his self-described destiny to serve in the United States Army. As a cadet, Bullard became deeply rooted in the culture of discipline, training and hard work. Though not a stellar student nor among the top in his class, Bullard threw himself into his studies and strengthened his base in education. West Point provided the structure the young cadet desired. The Academy also offered him unique social skills that enhanced his social skills throughout his soldier tenure.¹⁸

West Point imparted the formal education that many southerners sought, something countless families of the south emphasized due to the decaying white rural society after the war. In many ways, the experience solidified a deep sense of certainty that education was the foundation or launching point from which a soldier grounds himself in his profession. After four years, Bullard received his commission as a second lieutenant and orders to the Tenth Infantry Regiment. In the summer of 1885, Second Lieutenant Bullard began his service at Fort Union, New Mexico and began to take part in the legendary Geronimo campaign.¹⁹

¹⁷ Ibid., 20-24.

¹⁸ Ibid., 22-26.

¹⁹ Ibid., 55.

Stationed in the southwest was hard, but it provided the young lieutenant early exposure to two vastly different cultures – the culture of the Apache and the United States Army in which he served.²⁰ Not unlike future assignments Bullard would encounter, he immersed himself in learning the culture of the adversary he would face, the environment he would operate in, and the leaders he would serve. This determined impulse to study is not exclusive to this period of his life. Later in Bullard’s career, he continued to demonstrate a propensity to learn every aspect possible at all levels to gain an appreciation and awareness that prepared him for what he was about to face.

One of the most fundamental lessons Bullard learned during this campaign centered on the concept of military pacification. While serving under General George Crook, and later General Nelson Miles, Bullard observed the overarching operations to devise and carry out military techniques that seriously challenged the Apaches in warfare, and were able to articulate principles of dealing with Apaches and managing their reservations. These efforts directly and consistently enabled operations during the hunt for Geronimo. Military pacification, as Bullard would later reflect, set the conditions to achieve the strategic objective in the west. It also provided the basis for improving an otherwise dismal record of relations with Native American tribes throughout the remainder of the nineteenth century.²¹

For Bullard, the Geronimo campaign served as “an open-air classroom in which (he) learned a little about the Apache and a great deal about the United States Army.”²² During the expedition, he witnessed the realities of the frontier where the infantry had the unrewarding task of protecting settlers and supporting the cavalry. Serving as the team’s quartermaster and

²⁰ Ibid., 57.

²¹ Robert M. Utley, *Frontier Regulars – The United States Army and the Indian, 1886-1891* (Lincoln, NE: Bison Books, 1984), 392-393.

²² Millett, *The General*, 57.

commissary officer, he also learned to appreciate the importance of garnering supplies and equipment for the men in the field. This significant role served as a noteworthy experience shaping Bullard's transition into his service during the train-up for Cuba, the Philippines, and World War I. It was also during this period when Bullard began to recognize the importance of training and mental preparation – more specifically, the consequences of being untrained and lacking the proper mindset. Later in his career, Bullard would write, "...it [war or conflict] must be faced, if not with material preparation, at least with mental recognition and forethought for its demands and dangers."²³ After seeing firsthand the complications and relative disregard along the Mexican border, he began to recognize the importance of adequately arming, manning, equipping, and most importantly training the army, not only during the current conflict but looking outside the moment and discovering how to better prepare for the future.

At the time, Bullard found himself in the midst of a transformative period for the army twenty years after the U.S. Civil War. During the Geronimo campaign, Bullard gained his first and last experience with Indian fighting. Along the way, he became acquainted with two men who later became general officers, Henry Lawton and Leonard Wood.²⁴ He had earned the respect of his peers and seniors, alike. Additionally, he gained exposure to the practice of pacification, a subject he would develop and practice later in his career. The experience also exposed the young officer to an austere operational environment he had to deal with, a cultural understanding he had to calculate, and varying leadership styles he had to recognize and understand. In retrospect, this period became the foundation for Bullard's career – a profession he expected to leave soon after his time on the frontier.

²³ Robert L. Bullard, "When War Comes: A Mental Preparation," *Infantry Journal*, vol. 5 (July 1908), 198.

²⁴ Millett, *The General*, 60.

Spanish-American War – A Time for Preparation and Training

Not unlike other periods during American history, the nation was poorly prepared for major conflict prior to its entry into its war with Spain. With the transition taking place, career officers like Bullard began to contemplate service within the volunteer ranks of their adopted states. At the time, President McKinley and his War Department balanced the needs of leadership within the volunteer force and implemented a directive requiring volunteer units be commanded by officers from the career officer corps. More precisely, the president keenly understood the importance of military leadership within the country's National Guard. This decision to embed experience within the Volunteer ranks stressed the importance to "preserve the existence and local identification of the National Guard" while rounding its forces with veteran and educated officers.²⁵

Military operations commenced in the Caribbean on 20 April 1898. The navy executed an extensive blockade cutting off Havana, Matanzas, Mariel, and the port of Cienfuegos. The War Department prepared for an expedition to Cuba to demonstrate solidarity and provide aide to the insurgents seeking to undermine the Spanish rule. Army expeditions began smuggling weapons and supplies to the insurgency on Cuba while planning continued. At this time and hampered by the issues of raising a volunteer army back in the United States, hundreds of Regular officers began accepting appointments and service obligations to serve in combat.²⁶

Amid the political turmoil in Washington and during the lead up to the war, Bullard served at Fort Reno as a battalion adjutant. Due to the political sensitivities, he attempted to balance his request to fill a commissary vacancy in Washington with his own personal desire to serve within the Alabama Volunteers and perhaps gain a chance at command. Bullard adroitly

²⁵ Ibid.

²⁶ Graham A. Cosmas, *An Army for Empire: The United States Army in the Spanish-American War* (Columbia, Missouri: University of Missouri Press, 1971), 111-113.

maneuvered through the political wrangling and seemed to play his hand close to his chest as not to limit his options. Believing that the commissary position would stifle his career and regardless of the pressures, he received from the other officers within the Tenth to accept the post, Bullard committed and subsequently wired Governor Johnston of Alabama his acceptance to command a battalion on 25 May 1898.²⁷

In the late spring of 1898, Bullard began building and recruiting for his battalion. Having no weapons, no uniforms, and little military experience within its ranks, the ragtag unit of African-American soldiers led by primarily white officers faced a myriad of challenges.²⁸ Among his officers, Bullard directly established a command climate that fostered professional standards, strict adherence to authority, patience, and understanding.²⁹ His fundamental policy centered on “building unit *esprit* by demanding professional standards and appealing to the men’s race pride and sense of mission.”³⁰ Among the standards and policies he implemented, Bullard stressed a foundation of developing a strong sense of execution within his unit. His approach was methodical and undoubtedly rooted in his own understanding of and appreciation for education. Training was also a hallmark. In order to effectively train, Bullard understood that training needed purpose and for him, war and the nation’s ability to train for conflict served that function. Bullard would later advocate, “In spite of remonstrance and entreaty, reason and argument, history and experience, in time of war to train for war apparently remains still the policy of our country.”³¹ Apparently, this approach resonated and as Bullard focused almost solely on training his African-American Volunteers; he relied on one of his company commanders, Captain Francis

²⁷ Ibid., 95.

²⁸ Ibid., 99.

²⁹ Ibid.

³⁰ Ibid.

³¹ Robert L. Bullard, “When War Comes – A Mental Preparation,” *Infantry Journal*, vol. 5 (July 1908), 198.

G. Caffey, to continue the difficult task of mustering more men to join the ranks of the First Battalion.³²

Recognizing he was essentially starting from scratch, Bullard understood that military training affected citizens of a democracy. “Military Training concerns us only as it affects the citizens of a democracy. Right was the man, whoever he was, who said that for a democracy men, trained citizens, were far more necessary than for any other form of government, because in a democracy the citizens, the people, are called upon to judge in all things.”³³ In other words, if the citizens of the United States were not behind and did not support a conflict, the country could not effectively train and effectively fight its wars. As he began to train his soldiers for combat, this understanding of whom he was preparing and the purpose of their preparation resonated regardless of the type of conflict the nation was preparing to fight.

As August approached and the battalion began to take shape, the war in the Caribbean neared its end and the Third Alabama was in danger of disbanding before it had the opportunity to fight. Cynicism, however, did not plague the Third Alabama Volunteers. Now a major, Bullard remained a hard but fair commander. He ensured his soldiers had what they needed to train and was adamant when it came to the important details such as paying his soldiers on time and in full. When soldiers were out of line or committed petty offenses, he was quick to impose punitive action. Likewise, when a soldier exhibited exemplary performance, he quickly rewarded and recognized the achievement. Taking notice in late July, Governor Johnston justly promoted Bullard to the rank of colonel. Things were certainly looking optimistic for the regiment.

³² Millett, *The General*, 102.

³³ Robert L. Bullard, “Military Training: Its Effects on the Citizen,” *Infantry Journal*, vol. 19 (July 1921), 7.

Unfortunately for its commander and his prospect to battle-test his newly formed unit, so were things in Cuba, and in March 1899, the Third Alabama disbanded.³⁴

Bullard's experience, during his time in Alabama, launched him from relative obscurity to becoming an experienced and publicized Volunteer colonel.³⁵ Generals and senior leaders within the War Department had taken notice and Bullard had become a friend to a powerful politician, Governor Johnston. The lauded colonel who successfully mustered, assembled, and trained a ragtag regiment once again joined the regulars as a captain and commissary of subsistence. The lessons he learned, experience he gained, and appreciation for the African-American soldier, would shortly be put to use as the United States Army became engaged with an insurgency in the Pacific.³⁶

Philippine Service – A Moment to Pacify

As Bullard and his volunteers began to form in Mobile in May of 1898, the Spanish-American War had opened up off the shores of the Caribbean and in the Philippines. On the Pacific front, President McKinley conferred with the expedition commander, Major General Wesley Merritt. Merritt, in an effort to ascertain McKinley's strategic objectives, asked the president if it was his desire to subdue and hold all of the Spanish territory in the islands, or merely to seize and hold the capital of Manila. McKinley's reply on 19 May instructed Merritt that his expedition had a dual purpose of completing the reduction of Spanish power while providing order and security to the islands. Clearly, McKinley wanted to keep his options open.

³⁴ Ibid.,102-103.

³⁵ Ibid.,107.

³⁶ Ibid.

Thus began the ambiguous mission of ousting the Spanish and placing the Philippines under American authority.³⁷

Volunteer regiments activated immediately and with the consent of the president and the U.S. civil authorities in the Philippines, selecting commanders commenced. While on sick leave due to the health issues plaguing him over the years, Bullard received word he would command the Thirty-Ninth Infantry Regiment of the U.S. Volunteers in August 1899.³⁸ Extremely surprised and very pleased at the opportunity to command a regiment for the second time, Bullard intensely began to do what he knew best – train, equip and prepare his regiment for deployment.

On 17 August and while stationed at Fort Crook near Omaha, Nebraska, the War Department instructed Bullard to form his regiment by 24 September. Given such a short period to organize, the Thirty-Ninth's commander prepared to get the supplies and organize administrative records by bending Army regulations in an effort to meet the War Department's deadline. Not unlike his experiences while serving as the Third Alabama Volunteer Regimental commander, Bullard had to turn a group of undisciplined and raucous recruits (this time primarily Native American Indians) into a cohesive entity prepared to execute a difficult mission nearly 8,000 miles from their homes. Concerned that the regiment would not meet the 24 September deadline and despite the daunting task, the regiment gradually began to take form. On 3 October, Bullard reported to the War Department that the Thirty-Ninth Infantry Regiment was ready to move.³⁹

Bullard's regiment began to arrive in Manila Bay on 7 December 1899. The eager Thirty-Ninth commander immediately reported to the Eighth Corps Headquarters. Its commander, now

³⁷ Brian McAllister Linn, *The U.S. Army and Counterinsurgency in the Philippine War, 1899-1902* (Durham: University of North Carolina Press, 2000), 2.

³⁸ Millett, *The General*, 115.

³⁹ *Ibid.*, 117.

General Elwell S. Otis, was unaware that Bullard's regiment was scheduled to support operations in the Philippines, much less its recent arrival into theater. Assigned to the 1st Division, Bullard almost immediately started taking a look at the culture as it pertained to the conflict.⁴⁰

As Bullard's regiment arrived, his division commander and man he served under during his time along the Mexican border, Major General Henry Lawton, was killed in action. General Otis immediately turned over the division to Major General John Bates. Shortly after Bates assumed command, he began Otis's final campaign to occupy the southern Tagalog provinces. For Bullard, this would be his first combat operation in the Philippines.⁴¹

As the New Year approached, Bullard began to maneuver his regiment against Miguel Malvar's Batangas militia. Aided by a young artilleryman, Charles Summerall, Bullard quickly hit Malvar's left flank and was able to decisively defeat and pursue the Filipino insurgent forces northward towards Manila. Less than pleased with the overwhelming victory, Otis immediately reprimanded the strong-willed regimental commander. Bullard received orders to maintain his position and not to proceed with operations without authority directly from Otis. Interestingly, had the corps headquarters been paying more attention to what was actually taking place on the ground instead of Bullard's audacious, yet insubordinate, actions they might have noticed that his [Bullard's] campaign closely approximated their own on a smaller scale. Bullard had successfully condoned the enemy's rear that backed them into a sealed pocket. His actions, inspired through a lifetime of understanding and training, helped Bullard understand the overall operational environment and apply combat forces against an adversary. This particular event illustrates

⁴⁰ Ibid., 124.

⁴¹ Brian McAllister Linn, *The Philippine War – 1899-1902* (Lawrence: University of Kansas Press, 2002), 164-165.

Bullard's ability to see the larger picture as it related to his regiment's tactical actions within the corps' operations.⁴²

Early on, Bullard's actions created a confrontation between his division and corps headquarters. His sometimes contemptuous attitude towards Otis and the Eighth Corps' planners would occasionally provoke the strong-minded colonel to opine when his superiors issued specified instructions that did not attempt to achieve (what Bullard perceived) the corps' operational objectives. For instance, during the elections held in February and March 1900, Bullard was not convinced that "the benign army policy had reduced Filipino hostility," as assessed by the corps.⁴³ Bullard took a more comprehensive approach by organizing a system of spies and informers to study the outwardly cooperative citizens in the surrounding areas.⁴⁴ He instinctively suspected that the conditions had not improved, but rather that "the calm was superficial and the Filipinos' passivity was a tactic, not the dawn of an era of peace for Luzon."⁴⁵ To the optimists orchestrating operations from Manila, Bullard's perspective would soon prove to be more accurate.

In the early months of 1900, units within Bullard's regiment took to patrolling the mountainous region of Laguna in an effort to cut off the insurgency from the populated areas in Laguna and Batangas. Later that spring, Juan Cailles and Miguel Malvar (commanders within the Filipino insurgency) concentrated their efforts on maintaining their control of the people and

⁴² Ibid.,164-167.

⁴³ Ibid.,139. The Eighth Corps headquarters assumed that the army's major task was protecting the establishment of peaceful local Filipino governments. "In addition it initiated public health and primary education programs. In Bullard's district, the post commanders held elections in February and March (1900) and each of the garrison towns soon had a mayor (alcalde or presidente) and a municipal council. These local officials functioned under the watchful eye of the army post commander and the district commander, an American officer who functioned as the provincial governor. The army garrisons did little to interrupt or change the Filipino hostility." This seemed to perplex Bullard. His operational understanding also appeared to surpass those he served.

⁴⁴ Ibid.

⁴⁵ Ibid.

organizing their guerrillas for the rainy season campaign, rather than directly confronting American troops.⁴⁶ Assessing the effectiveness of his patrols and direct actions against the guerrilla forces, Bullard realized his measures were actually counterproductive. According to David Galula's acclaimed work on counterinsurgency warfare, "destroying or expelling from an area the main body of the guerrilla forces, preventing their return, installing garrisons to protect the population, tracking the guerrilla remnants – these are predominantly military operations."⁴⁷ The operation on Luzon had a semblance of Galula's theory of effectively defeating an insurgency. Much of the policing and political efforts, however, missed the mark. Bullard certainly appreciated this observation. Drawing on his greater understanding of defeating an insurgency through the strict adherence to pacification, he later achieved the confidence of the local population by focusing his efforts on building 63 schools, constructing roads and infrastructure, and directly engaging the population to secure their confidence.⁴⁸ Bullard understood that in order to defeat an insurgency, the populace had to be behind the pacifier's efforts. The peaceful behavior of the occupied people came only after the balance of punishing those who committed atrocities against American forces and providing for those who embraced American authority. The local government, however, still frustrated Bullard and it would not be until the stringent enforcement of General Orders 100 that conditions on the ground would truly improve.⁴⁹ This understanding would later assist the regimental commander later during the Moro wars in 1902.⁵⁰

⁴⁶ Ibid., 139-141.

⁴⁷ David Galula, *Counterinsurgency Warfare, Theory and Practice* (St. Petersburg, FL: Hailer Publishing, 2005), 61.

⁴⁸ Millett, *The General*, 143.

⁴⁹ Ibid., 145. First enacted during the U.S. Civil War, General Orders 100 enabled the Lincoln Administration to quell the Confederate partisan warfare. "Essentially, General Orders 100 proscribed any armed resistance other than that by uniformed soldiers fighting as conventional armies. Guerrillas, spies, terrorists, political organizers, false guides, and nonuniformed auxiliaries of any kind were neither

Operations continued throughout 1900 and 1901. During that time, Bullard once again found himself pulled from the glory of command and placed under the Subsistence Department for duty back in the United States. Later, in the summer of 1902, Bullard would once again serve in the Philippines – this time in Mindanao with his affiliated Twenty-Eighth Infantry Regiment. His battalion’s mission was construction. Pleased with the assignment, Bullard reached the town of Iligan where his battalion began to garrison that October. After establishing quarters, the battalion’s first order of business was road construction.⁵¹

During 1902, the U.S. Army faced nearly 300,000 indigenous people, commonly known as Moros, living in the Philippines during the time of the insurrection.⁵² Regardless of his personal biases, Bullard approached his next mission in Mindanao with great consideration. Describing the Moros, he stated, “The Moros of the South Philippines are the most primitive and remote of American subjects, but to all who observe them they are persistently interesting, principally for their very differences from other people. To strangers, whether visitors of a day or dwellers still after months, they are the subjects of never-ending comment and discussion.”⁵³ As he illustrated through his observations, Bullard took the time to recognize the intricacies of the Moros despite portraying them as primitive.

As he continued to better understand the situation, his mindset changed from a conventional approach to one that centered on pacification and administration. As tensions

recognized soldiers nor noncombatants. They were criminals, subject to immediate and harsh punishment for lawlessness. Under General Orders 100, however, the peaceful behavior of an occupied people had its rewards. It was the duty of a military commander to interfere as little as possible with the way of life of the people under his temporary jurisdiction.”

⁵⁰ Millett, *The General*, 165-170.

⁵¹ Ibid, 154.

⁵² Charles Byler, “Pacifying the Moros: American Military Government in the Southern Philippines, 1899-1913,” in *Military Review*, May-June 2005, 41-45.

⁵³ Robert L. Bullard, “Among the Savage Moros,” *Metropolitan Magazine*, vol. XXIV:III (June 1906), 264.

increased during his second tour, and the Moros became frequently more hostile in Mandanao, Bullard realized the complexities of combating guerrilla forces. He also observed the deteriorated conditions with an emboldened Moro population prepared to continue the cycle of Moro raids and American reprisals.⁵⁴ Later, during this period of his career in the Philippines, Bullard served as a district governor. He was observant and approached the Moros with personal acquaintance to understand their needs while working the issues facing their culture.⁵⁵ The endeavor to pacify the population was widely successful. Bullard's efforts and direct actions as a regimental commander in Luzon and later upon his return as a district governor in Mindinao, greatly contributed to the victory in the Philippines. Additionally, this particular experience taught him what we now refer to as the tenets of unified land operations. Bullard was *flexible* and masterfully achieved tactical and operational success by understanding what his higher unit headquarters was attempting to accomplish. He was also able to *integrate*, through a shared understanding and purpose with corps and division, adjacent units, and effectively communicating it down to the lowest level within his own regiment. Through *synchronization*, he demonstrated a unique ability to arrange "...military actions in time, space, and purpose" that eventually lead to the defeat of the insurgent stronghold and the pacification of the Moros. Collectively, through rigorous training, the profound appreciation for the Moro culture, and the application of the tenets of unified land operations, Bullard was able to sharpen his experience-base to provide the necessary leadership at the operational level.⁵⁶

Later in 1906, after serving in the Philippines and training the Third Alabama Volunteers, Bullard would get the opportunity to serve in Cuba during the Second Intervention, serving as a

⁵⁴ James R. Arnold, *The Moro War: How America Battled a Muslim Insurgency in the Philippine Jungle, 1902-1913* (New York, Bloomsbury Press, 2011), 103.

⁵⁵ Ibid., 251.

⁵⁶ ADP 3-0, 7-9.

District Governor. After writing extensively on the subject of pacification and contemplating ways to subjugate America's enemies without resorting to all-out conventional warfare, Bullard furthered his reputation as an intellectual and competent officer. At the end of the intervention, Bullard's efforts to revamp the Cuban military effort were noteworthy. Taking a holistic approach, the Army was responsible for the successful establishment of the Provisional Government in Cuba. This achievement, however, did not account for some of the more obvious shortcomings. Bullard was disappointed that he did not get the opportunity to enhance and rebuild Cuba's educational system, while other leaders were equally dissatisfied that the country's legal system, infrastructure, and disease control problems needed to be addressed.⁵⁷ Despite the obvious inadequacies of the Second Intervention, Bullard became more convinced that education provided the foundation necessary for a cohesive Army to serve and achieve the nation's strategic objectives. Little did he know that this strong desire to foster the need for education would become the primary reason for his selection to a critical position during the Great War.⁵⁸

A Period of Reflection

As Bullard ended his exploits in the Philippines and Cuba, he began writing extensively. As he had done throughout his career, he maintained a very detailed journal that allowed him to contemplate experiences, leaders with whom he served, ideas he pursued, and grand ideas on the way things ought to be. It only made sense to start sharing these ideas. After the turn of the century, he began expressing his thoughts on various topics from pacification to the mental preparation of the American soldier. Providing perspective, shedding light on his insights, and offering solutions to the big problems the Army and the nation faced – this was clearly what he

⁵⁷ Ibid.

⁵⁸ Allan R. Millett, *The Politics of Intervention: The Military Occupation of Cuba, 1906-1909* (Columbus: The Ohio State University Press, 1968), 254-263.

was attempting to do. The following are just a few of the relevant topics he wrote about that formed the foundation for his transition into an operational leader.

Overcoming Cultural Biases

Concurrent with his service in and after serving in Cuba, Bullard recounted his time in the Philippines. Taking an in-depth look and reflecting on his service, Bullard described the culture of the Moros with whom he served at the turn of the century. Undoubtedly, due to his upbringing and biases he held, Bullard's racial prejudices and contemptuous tendencies often manifested in his writings. Bullard, a son of slave owners in the Deep South, exhibited animosity on the subject of race. Overcoming these biases was challenging, but after looking beyond the slurs and condescending tone, it is clear that Bullard understood culture as it applies to the operational and tactical leader.

As he began to reveal his thoughts and explain his memories of the Moros, Bullard explicitly described their passion and importance for family, "...with them [the Moros] family is not simply a matter of foolish pride. It is of real importance. We may at first smile at the scruffy fellow who upon his first introduction to us, tells us who were his father and mother, his uncles, aunts, cousins, his wife, or wives, and her, or their fathers, mothers, uncles, aunts, cousins, and families and relatives by marriage of all these; but we comprehend him when we come to know that with the Moros, family is the sole protection of the individual."⁵⁹ Unlike many leaders of his time and even those currently serving, Bullard possessed an inimitable ability that allowed him to observe inhabitants within a culture. He took the time to examine what motivates them and

⁵⁹ Bullard, "Among the Savage Moros," 264.

intuitively knew that if he was to assist a partner, help the deprived, or fight an adversary, he truly needed to understand the people he engaged.

Bullard continued to describe the Moros as he would any other people he had observed during his service. Portraying them as savages, as the title of his article indicates, was not a depiction of his psyche. As a foreigner observing his surroundings, Bullard continues his examination of the Moros, "...the incoherence of the people, the large number of small chiefs, illustrates their haughty, impatient, and conceited independence. It means that few Moros are willing to follow another's lead. If they do not like their leader, they break away into separate dattoships."⁶⁰ Bullard accurately described the problems he and the Army in the Philippines faced. Frustrated by a clear and utter lack of unity within the culture, Bullard appeared to lambast the lack of western tendencies among the Moros. Recognizing these differences, he identified the problem faced by American forces. The importance of understanding the problem before solving it is essential for the operational leader. It was this understanding that led him to recognize how he, as a commander, could best resolve the problem in Mindanao. Bullard concluded this thought by stating, "...it is true that truth-finding is a tedious process in all important matters; but considering Moro character, conditions, and politics, no more tedious than among other peoples."⁶¹

Another challenge Bullard faced while serving in the Philippines and dealing with the Moros was faith and literature, "...literature, however, does not go beyond the Koran, a little letter-writing in affairs of great importance between dattos, certain little calendars for forecasting the weather, and tables for telling the fortunes of love, business, travel and war."⁶² Perhaps not as noteworthy as the more obvious tendencies of the culture, this observation nevertheless provides

⁶⁰ Ibid., 268.

⁶¹ Ibid., 269.

⁶² Ibid., 271.

another example of Bullard's determination to look beyond the physical traits of a culture and his attempts to understand what motivated a people.

One of the interesting techniques Bullard propagated during this time was the idea of pacification. At the time and serving in the rank of lieutenant colonel with the Eighth Infantry, Bullard drew upon his experiences during his almost thirty year career and focused mostly on his time on the islands of Luzon and Cuba. His argument offers his thoughts on the subject with a provocative interlude that resonated and provides a great deal of relevance for today's leaders, "Today our soldier, the war-maker, has become also a peacemaker and peace-preserver. This is questioned because men in general have as yet noted him only in his old, striking function, War, and because he himself has not yet fully recognized his newer role."⁶³ From his exposure during the reconstruction in the South after the U.S. Civil War as a young boy to his experiences with the Apache, Moros, and Cubans, Bullard was more than qualified to lecture on the subject. A strong proponent of pacification, he logically provided an argument for why it is important for the "regular soldier" to study its practice and application.

Several years had passed since his service in the Philippines when he began to contemplate his views on pacification and cultural awareness. During those years, Bullard undoubtedly matured and through deliberate reflection began to understand his adversary. Regarding the Moros, he concluded this thoughts by stating, "...we know that any man or race that will work is not beyond hope of redemption, and the Moros, be they what they will, are still a race not wholly averse to work. Savages they are indeed to-day; industrians they may as a people become to-morrow."⁶⁴

⁶³ Robert L. Bullard, "Military Pacification," *Journal of the Military Service Institution of the United States* (January-February 1910), 2.

⁶⁴ Bullard, "Among the Savage Moros," 279.

This experience, among others during his service in small wars, provided a foundation of culture in a broader perspective. Later in his career, Bullard would take these lessons learned and apply them as he prepared for service in WWI. Studying the culture of an adversary, understanding the people in the operational environment, and effectively working within the constraints of culture are all attributes Bullard learned during small conflicts which enabled him to effectively command at the highest levels later in his career.

Training and Instilling Discipline within a Military

Several years later and as his career began to wind down, Bullard looked back on his experiences and contemplated the importance of military training and its effects on the citizen soldier. Linked very closely to his writings and insights on preparing for war, Bullard began to focus on his recollections of the Great War. He deliberately contemplated what it took to train a military with democratic values. According to current doctrine, “Unit training and leader development are the Army’s life-blood. Army leaders train units to be versatile...[and leaders] to be competent, confident, agile, and adaptive using the Army leader development model.”⁶⁵

During the entry into World War I, General Pershing tasked Bullard to establish a school to train staffs, leaders, and soldiers as they arrived in France. Starting from a rudimentary foundation, Bullard sought the supplies, facilities and the wherewithal to ensure a solid foundation for the school.⁶⁶ One of the issues he remarked on was the importance of discipline, “...as a discipline-producer the whole world knows what military training does. Nobody questions its fine effect. The trouble is that we have not believed there was any need of discipline

⁶⁵ Headquarters, Department of the Army, Army Doctrinal Publication 7-0, *Training Units and Developing Leaders* (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 2012), 1.

⁶⁶ Bullard, *Personalities and Reminiscences of the War*, 60.

for us. We [Americans] fortunately are beginning to know better now. In this thickening world we are learning that our nature without discipline is of little consequence.”⁶⁷ According to Bullard, Americans were less inclined, as compared to other people, to adhere and embrace discipline. This challenge was significant as it pertained to following orders in stressful situations. From a young age, through his tenure at the United States Military Academy, until writing these words as a senior officer with over forty years of service, Bullard understood the meaning and importance of discipline.

Pleased with the aspect of discipline and the overall training entering World War I, Bullard began to explore the deeper facets of war-fighting. He recognized that every war brings innovative nuances in training and methods.⁶⁸ As with the advent of rifled weapons to an era of the magazine-firing breechloader and machine gun, Bullard recognized the importance of updated training during this time to ensure techniques and procedures were effectively implemented.⁶⁹ Not unlike the introduction of gunpowder, the aircraft, the battleship, or any other advancement in military capability, training must be carefully developed and considered prior to execution in combat.

As he continued to contemplate training, he also knew that a soldier must possess a respect for law and obedience as it pertains to preparing a soldier for combat. From a democratic perspective, he stated, “...in democracies the authority is the law. Authority is the starting point of Military Training. Without respect for it, without obedience to it there is no Military Training.”⁷⁰ Best illustrated during his service in the Philippines, the rule of law and obedience

⁶⁷ Bullard, “Military Training – Its Effects on the Citizen,” 9.

⁶⁸ Bullard, *Personalities and Reminiscences of the War*, 100.

⁶⁹ Russell F. Weigley, *The American Way of War: A History of the United States Military Strategy and Policy* (Bloomington, University of Indiana Press, 1960), 197.

⁷⁰ Bullard, “Military Training – Its Effects on the Citizen,” 9.

became a catalyst of General Orders 100. With the implementation of General Orders 100, Bullard had a means he could brandish to enforce law and obedience. Heading into December 1900, the Army found itself “in a profoundly ambiguous relationship with the Filipino people.”⁷¹ With the application of General Orders 100, Bullard’s men now had another tool to dissuade the local populace from supporting or siding with the guerrilla forces. Given the circumstance and convinced that General Orders 100 was the key to winning against an insurgency and pacifying the Moros in the Philippines, Bullard fully appreciated the importance of the rule of law and obedience as it pertained to military training and preparing an army for combat.

Lastly, Bullard believed in the imperative of working towards a common good, “...military training is one of the quickest and surest ways of bringing a man to know and recognize the fact that in this world he must have things, if he has them at all, in community with others. Cooperation, working for the good of the whole, is a principle of organization and training.”⁷² One man alone cannot win a war or defeat an army. Bullard understood that training a military required the individual to submit and become part of the collective in order to become an effective fighting force. This is perhaps an obvious observation, but nevertheless an observation necessary to grasp when building and training an effective and cohesive army.

Mentally Preparing for War

As tensions began rising in Europe prior to World War I, Bullard started writing about mentally preparing for war, military education, and leadership. Thinking beyond his rank, he described the significance of these subjects. Speaking from past experiences in the Philippines and Cuba, Bullard took a moment to look beyond the conflicts of the past and instead focused on

⁷¹ Ibid.

⁷² Bullard, “Military Training – Its Effects on the Citizen,” 10.

what it will take to prepare the nation (specifically the United States and its traditions) for future conflicts.

Preparing a nation like the United States and its inherent focus on individual rights was a distinctive challenge. Bullard looked at Japan and western European nations as the contrast. He described the differences between the American individualism to the rest of the industrial world's more nationalistic countries by stating, "...men whose souls chafed and were rebellious and unsubmitive under order and restraint in the old world. We are their sons. Our soldier in war will be a warrior. After trial I ask to command none better; but the unquestioning, easy subject of training and command, the subordinated soldier, the regulated machine of Europe and Japan, at his best he has never been and never will be."⁷³ Bullard distinguished nations into two categories – nationalistic and the American tradition of individualism. A nationalistic country, as Bullard described, was one that focused on the collective rather than the individual.⁷⁴ From a U.S. perspective, Bullard recognized this profound challenge as the nation prepared for war.

After recognizing and clearly defining the United States' challenge as it pertains to preparing for war, Bullard began to analyze the individualistic tendencies of the country. The problem Bullard faced centered on the hurried gathering and training of 'individuals' (i.e. men) preparing in a time of war. These philosophical insights of preparing men focused on themselves rather than the collective good of the country or society served the lieutenant colonel well during his service in the next great conflict in Europe, as the American Army was less than prepared to fight alongside its allies and against an extremely formidable adversary.

From Bullard's perspective, the solution to the nation's problems was simple in words yet complex in accomplishing, "Soldier-making will for us in war consist in its essential feature in

⁷³ Ibid.,198-199.

⁷⁴ Ibid.

this one thing – the conversion of the individualist into a nationalist, the egoist into a patriot. On this all other things hang and will follow.”⁷⁵ Characteristics like self-sacrifice, patriotism, manhood, honor, sense of duty, and working towards the common good resonated, and through deliberate training, Bullard believed he could “...turn such a man into a soldier.”⁷⁶

He continued with the concept of training by stating, “...as to the military training proper there are various points. Those who at our recent maneuvers candidly compared regular and militiaman can hardly have failed to have been impressed with the idea that the superiority of the former. Why is it? Mainly because with plenty of time in the ordinary course of things we waste a great deal of both time and effort upon non-essentials, things that add nothing of practical value to the soldier, and in so doing we get entirely away from the subject of soldiering.”⁷⁷ This particular insight related to his experience as a regimental commander of the Thirty-Ninth Infantry prior to service in the Philippines. Bullard suggested that training the essentials was what was best when preparing a nation (specifically, the United States) for war.

As an individualistic nation, Bullard understood the unique challenges of preparing the United States for war. To prepare for war, the nation must train. In order to manage those preparing to fight and train, Bullard relied on leader experience. Lastly, training the basics provided the foundation for a cohesive fighting force. Through a capable mental aptitude, a leader would be able to solve the challenges of training and preparing for combat. This essential ability becomes immediately relevant as the nation once again prepared for war.

⁷⁵ Ibid.

⁷⁶ Ibid.

⁷⁷ Ibid., 201.

Senior Service

As Europe was in the thralls of war, Bullard was once again on the border of Mexico – the place he began his career. The Army deployed along the Mexican border as early as 1906 to curb the problems plaguing the southwest; the threat manifested in the form of “border security, local violence, guerrilla warfare, racial politics, and state diplomacy.”⁷⁸ At this time, Bullard took part in the campaign when the notorious José Doroteo Arango Arámbula, also known as Pancho Villa, began to engage the United States along the southern border.⁷⁹ Here, Bullard observed German propagandists at work, “...stirring up trouble for the United States and trying to create a diversion that would keep us occupied on our own side of the world – and thus prevent our effectual entrance into the European war.”⁸⁰ Spearheading the American effort on the border was General Frederick Funston. In Bullard’s memoirs he stated, “To meet these conditions [activity of Mexican raiders and German threats on our border] the bulk of our National Guard was ordered there.”⁸¹

In an effort to guard the border along Mexico, the National Guard mobilized. As this occurred, Bullard closely observed and became concerned with the exercise of command and the movement of troops to the border, specifically, “their placing in camp and under command.”⁸² The exercise of command concerned Bullard because there was confusion regarding the separated and disjointed construct of the units arrayed along the border. Bullard explained, “From the

⁷⁸ Thomas A. Bruscino, “A Troubled Past: The Army and Security on the Mexican Border, 1915-17,” *Military Review* (July-August 2008), 31.

⁷⁹ Bullard, *Personalities and Reminiscences of the War*, 1.

⁸⁰ Ibid. Through reflection and being an adamant proponent for the United States’ entry into World War I, Bullard was able to see connections others might have overlooked. Specifically, he had an ability to correlate activities in one conflict as they may apply to another. This capacity is significant to the operational practitioner.

⁸¹ Ibid.

⁸² Ibid., 6.

mouth of the Rio Grande along the whole border to San Diego on the Pacific there were, for long, always two and sometimes three separate and independent commands attempting to do the same thing on the same ground at the same time.”⁸³ Early on, Bullard realized there was a severe issue with unity of command. With the prospects of entering a conventional conflict with Germany, these problems indicated an “ill omen” that needed to be addressed soon if the United States was to fight in Europe.⁸⁴ In retrospect, Bullard’s sobering premonitions would prove to be accurate as the War Department began preparing to deploy to France. Training, mobilizing a nation in an effort to mentally prepare for war, and understanding the European culture from the perspective of the adversary and those the country would ally themselves inevitably resonated.

America’s Entrance into World War I – A Chance to Educate

Once again, the nation was mobilizing and entering into war – this time a conventional fight unlike any the world had ever seen. While on assignment at the Plattsburg Training School in New York under General Leonard Wood, Bullard received orders from Washington that he would be among the first American contingents to arrive in Europe. Eager and anxious, Colonel Bullard reported to the acting Army Chief of Staff, General Tasker Bliss. While in Washington, Bullard learned that the American Expeditionary Force commander was to be General Pershing. He also was informed he would be promoted to the rank of brigadier general and assigned to command the 2d Infantry Brigade in the 1st Division.⁸⁵

During the month of June, Bullard intensely prepared for his departure for France stated in one of his diaries, “I studied and learned all I could about the orders and plans for the

⁸³ Ibid.

⁸⁴ Ibid., 5.

⁸⁵ Ibid., 18-25.

expedition on which I was detailed to go to France.”⁸⁶ As he prepared, Bullard described the planning efforts as weak, complicated, and centralized. The division arriving in France was being directed at the very highest levels. Bullard was concerned about what was likely to happen to the United States and its men entering a war such as this. He left Washington a week later extremely concerned and disheartened at the shape the Army was in and its perceived ability to fight a conventional conflict such as it would face in Europe.⁸⁷

Upon arriving into the port of St. Nazaire, France on 28 June, Bullard received a visit from General Pershing.⁸⁸ Contemplating the need for a forum to educate soldiers entering France, Pershing began pulling leaders from across the ranks to fill the necessary billets to prepare the AEF for battle.⁸⁹ Knowing Bullard’s awareness and emphasis on training through direct interaction and perhaps reading his published articles on the subject, Pershing personally placed the newly promoted brigadier general in charge of training units as they arrived into theater. Pershing knew the Army needed discipline and a strict adherence to structure; Bullard was the ideal candidate for the positions. The institution established was the 1st Division School. One of the many issues he recognized was the orders’ process and what need to be done in order to train the staff officer. Bullard noted that it was necessary, in the midst of war, to begin teaching about orders so that staff would be able to write orders with numerous headings and annexes – only a trained officer could effectively perform such a task. He recognized that the orders’ process had become more complex with combined maneuver and that one of the keys necessary to the

⁸⁶ Ibid., 23.

⁸⁷ Ibid., 23-25.

⁸⁸ Ibid., 32.

⁸⁹ Frank E. Vandiver, *Black Jack: The Life and Times of John J. Pershing, Volume II* (College Station, Texas A&M University Press, 1977), 771.

successful execution on the battlefield had to be the writing and conveying of clear and understandable orders for the tactical leaders on the ground.⁹⁰

A year later, the 1st Division School became the 1st Corps School. Now operating with a cadre of nearly 3,000 men, the school quickly became an institution that efficiently prepared American soldiers “for active operations against the enemy’s thousands of officers, non-commissioned officers, and specialists – machine-gunners, automatic riflemen and bayonet specialists, grenadiers, Stokes-mortar men, engineers, signalers, every kind of specialist in the field artillery, platoon leaders, company commanders, battalion and regimental commanders, all trained for the special work which they were to do.”⁹¹ This was revolutionary at the time. The school became the hallmark for preparing leaders and soldiers alike. Furthermore, it was the initiative and design by a man who had been contemplating and considering the importance of training and preparedness his whole career.

About this same time, Pershing was beginning to restructure the framework of his future command. From July to November 1917, Bullard travelled throughout France to observe other schools operating within the country and along the front lines of the French.⁹² Despite the enormous efforts of the 1st Corps School, the French were becoming more anxious as casualties mounted. Pershing’s framework of the newly formed American Expeditionary Force (AEF) was beginning to take shape. What was happening was colossal, but as Bullard put it, “one conceivable condition could call into being its equal – a conflict of the East and West, something that would take the armies of the West to the yellow East, or the hordes of the yellow East to the West. Its like could be produced only where but one will govern, not ever in a democracy.

⁹⁰ Ibid., 51-60.

⁹¹ Ibid., 64.

⁹² Ibid., 67.

Democracy means mediocrity. This was superiority.”⁹³ The undertaking of forming such a large, and now competent and well-trained force was significant. The AEF, comprised of citizen soldiers from a democratic upbringing, was now prepared to fight alongside their European counterparts against a formidable enemy. As Bullard wrote earlier in his career, “...men whose souls chafed and were rebellious and unsubmissive under order and restraint in the old world. We are their sons. Our soldier in war will be a warrior. After trial I ask to command none better; but the unquestioning, easy subject of training and command, the subordinated soldier, the regulated machine of Europe and Japan, at his best he has never been and never will be.”⁹⁴ Several years later, he would get the opportunity to command these brave men in combat.

Command in War – An Opportunity to Lead

As the schools across France began to operate, Bullard began to look for other opportunities. While touring the schools and at the AEF Headquarters, Bullard asked General Pershing if there were plans for his [Bullard’s] next assignment. Pershing told him that he had in mind to assign Bullard to command the 1st Division. Pershing described Bullard as a man who could write orders for speed, professional, and disciplined. He admired Bullard’s work ethic and the way his men worked for the Alabamian.⁹⁵

On 14 December 1917, Bullard took command of the division. Upon assuming command, Bullard reflected, “Experience had taught me that in the absence of opportunity for the

⁹³ Ibid., 77.

⁹⁴ Bullard, “When War Comes; A Mental Preparation,” 199.

⁹⁵ Vandiver, *Black Jack: The Life and Times of John J. Pershing, Volume II*, 859.

exercise of higher command, failures are sure, but that notwithstanding this our government and our people made no allowance for this lack of opportunity.”⁹⁶

Recognizing the privilege of command, Bullard refused to take the opportunity lightly. Training was the first undertaking he addressed. To formulize this enormous task, Bullard contemplated the type of war the Americans and the allies faced. For years, prior to the United States’ entry into World War I, Europe became mired in the deadlock of trench warfare. Understanding this defensive mindset and reality, Bullard drew upon his memories and studies, “I recalled from my boyhood the old Confederates’ stories of their demoralization from being long besieged in Vicksburg. I recalled my own experience of seeing the utter discouragement and spiritlessness of a regiment of our regular army in the Philippines that had lived in trenches some five months, surrounded by even an inferior enemy. In spite of their present belief in and their adherence only to trench warfare, I could see that the French had in them no offensive spirit.”⁹⁷ It was during this time, he began to sort through the predicament faced by many commanding officers – especially during war.

Partnered with the 47th Chasseurs (a French division), the First Division began to train for trench warfare before formal exposure to the frontlines. The training and the dynamic of the particular fight provided Bullard the opportunity to see where there were gaps or deficiencies within his ranks. One of the more notable shortcomings was education. Bullard noted that the American officers relied heavily on tactical prescriptions to solve complex problems. To this end, he sought to provide a demand for more detailed orders; something he worked on quite extensively when establishing the schools in France. As the training continued, many leaders within the division failed to meet the standards Bullard set forth. Despite setbacks and the long

⁹⁶ Bullard, *Personalities and Reminiscences of the War*, 96.

⁹⁷ *Ibid.*, 98.

days of preparation, Bullard's division through "devotion, untiring energy, [and] adaptability" was ready for combat.⁹⁸

Another noteworthy characteristic of this conflict centered on the aligned coalitions fighting. The Allied forces consisted of France, Great Britain, Russia, the United States, and other nations from around the world. Germany's alliance primary consisted of Austria-Hungary and Italy – also known as the Triple Alliance. Bullard appreciated the dynamics of the conflict and much like he did during his previous tours, he used this broader understanding to his advantage. In October 1917, he witnessed the decline of French morale along with the internal Russian difficulties. The slowness of the Americans entry into the war began to affect the morale of the French. These unfortunate events also provided Bullard a distinctive motivation to get his soldiers into the fight as a means to turn momentum of the conflict. He drew upon a deeper appreciation of the culture of those fighting – for the French; Bullard knew that the Americans had to begin to shoulder much more of the burden if the Allies were to succeed.⁹⁹

On 15 January, the 1st Division finally initiated movement to the frontlines. As fighting ensued, the division's commander again began to draw on his instincts and reflect on experiences. How were the soldiers adapting to the conditions on the ground and the environment they were exposed? Not unlike his time in the Philippines and other environments he had served, Bullard recognized that physical surroundings (the weather, terrain, temperature, etc.) adversely or positively affected the soldiers' preparedness to fight. The changing seasons, from January-May 1918, affected the way supplies reached the frontline, maneuvers, and the general morale of his soldiers. These variables directly influenced Bullard and the decisions he made.¹⁰⁰

⁹⁸ Ibid., 106-109.

⁹⁹ Edward M. Coffman, *The War to End All Wars: The American Military Experience in World War I* (Madison, University of Wisconsin Press, 1968), 190-193.

¹⁰⁰ Bullard, *Personalities and Reminiscences of the War*, 291.

As May approached, the division had made its way into Mesnil-St. Firmin, and Bullard observed the lack of effectiveness of his patrols and raids at the unit level. Prior to the war, Bullard knew that emphasis on such tasks was critical for any size organization to fight and effectively win wars. He noted, "...with the characteristic American largeness and contempt of small things we have in recent years passed almost at a bound from nothing to our Kaiser-like great maneuvers. We all but skipped regiment and battalion and proudly tackled army corps and division [maneuvers]."¹⁰¹ The patrolling and raiding steadily improved as most units do when exposed to a combat environment for any period. This particular observation illustrated Bullard's situational awareness down to the small unit level within his division.

As American forces integrated into the war, Bullard constantly met and convened with several French general officers. Having fluency in French and understanding the culture as well as any American serving in his position, he understood the motivating factors of the French and could relate to their perspective. Specifically, he admired their temperament and approach to fighting, "...I knew from it [their preparedness] that they were soldiers, great clear-minded commanders."¹⁰² Once again, Bullard astutely recognized the importance of culture as it applied to those he served alongside. Soon, Bullard would be leaving his relatively new command to assume command of the United States III Corps.¹⁰³

Subordinate to the French Sixth Army under General Degoutte, Bullard assumed command of III Corps in July 1918.¹⁰⁴ Consisting of the United States 1st and 2nd Divisions, and a Moroccan division, he began amassing his units similarly to the manner he prepared for Cuba

¹⁰¹ Bullard, "Small Maneuvers," in *Infantry Journal*, vol. 2, (July 1905), 57.

¹⁰² Bullard, *Personalities and Reminiscences*, 200.

¹⁰³ Edward M. Coffman, *The War to End All Wars: The American Military Experience in World War I*, (Madison, University of Wisconsin, 1968), 156.

¹⁰⁴ Bullard, *Personalities and Reminiscences*, 212.

with the Alabama Volunteers. Content with his new assignment and faced with an imminent battle progressing in Soissons; Bullard placed the Moroccan division between his 1st and 2nd Divisions running north and south from Soissons to Chateau-Thierry. Understanding the concept of decisive points and deception operations, Bullard's divisions attacked through Soissons and into the Chateau-Thierry salient. Deceiving the Germans – by not initiating the assault with artillery and clearly identifying where to attack the enemy – provided the battle a quick and decisive end that resulted in the German capitulation within three days. His corps fought well and from Soissons to the Meuse-Argonne, Bullard proudly provided the necessary leadership for the soldiers who served under him.¹⁰⁵

On 12 October, became the commanding general of the newly organized Second Army. At the time, First Army was in the midst of conducting an offensive in the Meuse-Argonne region that had been ongoing for more than two weeks. While the First Army was decisively engaged, Bullard ordered his divisions to actively patrol and conduct raids in preparation for the campaign. However, on 11 November and less than a month upon assuming command, Bullard's units were ordered to stand down as the Armistice became effective that morning. The command, nevertheless, was another accomplishment for the man from Alabama and a testament to how he was viewed by his superiors. For Bullard, it marked the end of his combat career; one in which he excelled.¹⁰⁶

Conclusion and Implications

Lieutenant General Robert L. Bullard, like other leaders of his time, was highly instrumental in providing a foundation and design for today's operational practitioners. Taking a

¹⁰⁵ Ibid., 217-221.

¹⁰⁶ Department of the Army, *American Armies and Battlefields in Europe*. Center of Military History (Washington DC: Government Printing Office, 1938). 113.

holistic approach and possessing the necessary mental aptitude throughout his career, Bullard was able to lead soldiers through arguably many of the most challenging and successfully fought battles in American history. As noted earlier, today's military leaders are faced with addressing many of the most complex and difficult issues confronting the nation. Bullard, not unlike today's operational leaders, was placed in some of the most austere environments and confronted diverse cultures prior to and during his numerous combat tours. From working with the Moros in the Philippines to serving at the most senior levels during the Great War, Bullard embraced the significance of culture – of those against whom he fought, those he served alongside, and those with whom he simply was stationed. He implicitly grasped the concept that in order to serve as a senior staff officer or planner (i.e., as an operational leader), one must understand the culture and its significance as it relates to conflict, be trained and properly educated, and possess the necessary mental aptitude to understand the operational environment during both small and large conflicts. For Bullard, these attributes clearly contributed to and shaped his approach to achieve the strategic objectives put forth by the upper echelon leaders of the nation, both appointed and elected.

During his early career, Bullard was exposed to an austere operational environment. It was also here that he established an appreciation for the application of military pacification. This understanding of how to maneuver small units to achieve, in some cases, strategic objectives resonated with the young officer.¹⁰⁷ Coupled with his understanding of maneuvering small units, Bullard apparently began to observe individuals like Generals Crook and Miles, and their use of principles applying to military pacification. These lessons enabled him to gain an appreciation for pacification throughout a conflict, regardless of the size.

¹⁰⁷ Bullard, "Small Maneuvers," 57.

While serving in the Philippines, Bullard commanded a regiment in combat. This opportunity provided him a deepened awareness of culture and – despite his overpowering biases – he managed to gain an appreciation for the Moros and their way of life. In addition to his newfound appreciation for culture, Bullard furthered his understanding of pacification. Writing in the *Journal of the Military Service Institution of the United States* several years later, he emphasized the importance of its practice and need to understand the concepts. Through experience during his early career until the time he published his piece on pacification, Bullard fully realized that what the Army had been doing since the end of the U.S. Civil War needed to be learned, captured, and not forgotten. Bullard best described pacification as, “In point of time it falls between war and peace, between organized resistance and complete acceptance of the dominating power, between disorder and full return to civil order.”¹⁰⁸

As the United States entered World War I, Bullard began to apply lessons he learned through his early career. Training and preparing for war during this time became the most essential components of Bullard’s tenets. As the nation began to muster and organize itself, he took notice of the inadequacies of its military force while serving along the Mexican border prior to a declaration of war. Training, Bullard believed, played the most essential component when a nation prepares for war. It directly contributed to the discipline necessary for men to work in close relations and fight as a cohesive unit. If the nation was to achieve the strategic objectives set by its democratically elected officials, trained men must be prepared to plan and execute tactical operations across a sometimes-massive environment. Bullard understood this, reflected on it, and got the opportunity to execute at the highest levels during World War I.¹⁰⁹

¹⁰⁸ Bullard, “Military Pacification,” 1-4.

¹⁰⁹ Bullard, “Military Training,” 7-9.

Experience and exposure to a variety of combat and garrison assignments cultivated these attributes. For instance, while assigned as a commissary of subsistence, a less than desirable position for the once lauded regimental commander training his men for combat in the Caribbean, Bullard learned the importance of supplying and sustaining formations in the field. Possessing this particular experience-base, Bullard was able with considerable alacrity to rapidly prepare his regiment for its tour in the Philippines soon after. Furthermore, although not a stellar student during his time at the United States Military Academy, Bullard nevertheless appreciated the importance of education and, in particular, training. During his initial service in World War I, he was personally selected by General Pershing to stand up the 1st Division Schools in France to acclimate soldiers as they arrived in theater. Methodically shaping inexperienced young men into proficient platoon leaders, skilled staff officers, and competent soldiers, was perhaps Bullard's most significant undertaking – one in which he excelled. It was this adept understanding of how to educate and train the citizen soldier that Bullard became best known.

As today's operational leaders prepare to plan and execute operations in far-flung areas of an unsettled world, it is well to reflect on how they grow as leaders through education, training, and experiences. As today's leaders begin to better understand the threats facing the nation, the most valuable lessons operational practitioners and leaders can garner are the ones that have already been learned by those before. Examining Lieutenant General Robert L. Bullard's distinctive career provides a foundation for some of those lessons to enable current operational leaders.

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